UNITED NATIONS **A**

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.191/IPC/15
26 July 2000

Original: ENGLISH

Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee for
the Third United Nations Conference on the
Least Developed Countries
First session
New York, 24 July 2000
Agenda item 3

REPORT OF THE THIRD INTER-AGENCY MEETING ON THE PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

New York, 20 July 2000

00 55222

CONTENTS

Page

I. Opening of the Meeting 1

II. Statements ..... 3 - 8

III. Concluding statement by the Chair 8

Annexes

I. Specific contributions made or to be made by agencies ..... 9 - 11

II. Agenda 12

III. Attendance 13

I. Opening of the meeting

1. The Third Inter-Agency Meeting was opened by the Executive Secretary of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. The agenda and organization of work adopted by the meeting is attached as annex II.

II. Statements

2. The **Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD** said that the vision of the Secretary-General of the Conference encompassed four interrelated components: inclusion; ownership; action; and implementation. Inclusion referred on the one hand to the full participation by the United Nations and other international organizations, and on the other the participation of all countries, LDCs and donor countries alike, as well as civil society and the business community. Ownership of the process by the LDCs – in terms of both their country level programmes and the global programme - was a critical factor in establishing legitimacy and promoting a better environment for implementation. If the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was to achieve better results than the previous ones, proposals submitted for adoption at the Conference must be action-oriented and concrete, offering deliverables that were measurable.

3. The **Executive Secretary of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries** said that the Inter-Agency Meeting mechanism had been established to ensure the full mobilization and coordination of all the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system for the purpose of preparation and follow-up of the LDC III Conference. Referring to the statement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the LDC Ministerial Meeting in October 1998, she recalled Mr. Kofi Annan's sentiment that the LDC III Conference should be inclusive and serve as a rallying paint for Governments, the United Nations, other international organizations, civil society and the private sector with the singular purpose of fashioning a New Development Agenda for the LDCs. The purpose of the third Inter-Agency Meeting was to discuss specific proposals which organizations and agencies wished to contribute to the preparatory process and the Conference itself.

4. The **Secretary of the Conference** introduced the LDC III secretariat's suggestions for the structure of the Conference. A key objective in designing the structure was to make it both attractive and productive. Drawing from the experience of UNCTAD X, efforts were being made to ensure cross-fertilization of the various components of the Conference with a view to contributing to concrete and measurable outcomes. There would also be facilities for exhibitions in a pavilion made available to LDCs, donor countries, United Nations and other international organizations. He encouraged the agencies to indicate their interest in coordinating or participating in any of the special events.

5. The **representative of ECA** said that, regarding the substantive preparations for the Conference, ECA welcomed the theme of "integration through knowledge-based competitiveness", which corresponded to the theme of the recommendations of an ECA Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Africa's development strategies, held in March 2000 (ECA/ESPD/AD-HOC/EXP/O4/2000). However, since the word "integration" suggested that the LDCs were not part of the global economy, the theme could be reworded to read "development through knowledge-based competitiveness". As far as the preparatory process was concerned, ECA was actively preparing the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, during which a special event on African LDCs was also expected to take place.

6. The **representative of OSCAL** said that her Office had prepared a note on the linkage between major UN Conferences and Summits and the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s, as requested by the Second Consultative Forum. The report concluded that all future UN conferences should highlight LDC issues, and adequate mechanisms should be put in place to monitor the concrete impact of those conferences on the LDCs' development. She stressed the vital importance of the energy sector to LDC's development, and said that her office was working closely on this issue with the Energy Branch of DESA. OSCAL would prepare an issues note on energy development for the LDCs, and, along with the outcome of an ad hoc expert group meeting to be organized in collaboration with other UN organizations, it would use both as a contribution to the interactive debate on "Enhancing productive capacity". OSCAL would also make an input to the Conference on "Women Entrepreneurs".

7. The **representative of ESCAP** said that his organization was helping Asia and Pacific LDCs prepare their country action plans: three subregional studies had been completed, and the synthesis study would be ready shortly. A regional preparatory meeting was scheduled to take place before the end of 2000, and a vision document for Asia and Pacific LDCs arising from the meeting would be presented for endorsement to a special ESCAP meeting in early 2001. He was concerned about the "ownership" issue, which meant that all national reports had to be cleared by Governments; this would certainly create a time constraint.

8. The **representative of FAO**, recalling that during the Second Inter-Agency Meeting his organization had announced that it would make a substantive contribution to the Conference, confirmed that work was advancing on a concept paper. The study being undertaken would focus on the prospects for, and a strategy for accelerating, the agricultural development of LDCs in the context of globalization and liberalization. The analysis would examine, among other things, all the major constraints relating to production, the institutional and regulatory framework, market access issues and strategies designed to overcome constraints, keeping in view the broad objective of promoting growth and poverty alleviation. The study would also recommend a range of measures to stimulate production and investment in agriculture. The results of the FAO study would be a useful input to the preparation of country-level programmes.

9. The **representative of UNHCR** said that the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees had sent a letter to all field offices, urging them to participate in the preparatory process at the country level. The socio-economic impact of refugee flows was an important issue which deserved serious study with a view to elaborating emergency preparedness and contingency plans. A further issue that needed attention was the environmental impact of refugee flows.

10. The **representative of UNAIDS** presented her organization's work in assessing the negative impact of HIV on the economy, business profits, food production, and the social sector in developing countries. Africa continued to be the continent most affected by HIV/AIDS and special emphasis should therefore be placed on African LDCs during the preparatory process of the Conference. In addition to Governments and UN agencies, her organization was bringing the private sector and NGOs together in addressing the AIDS epidemic. UNAIDS would ask its intercountry teams/country programme advisers in Addis Ababa and Bangkok to contact ECA and ESCAP in order to get involved in preparations at the country level. Finally, UNAIDS would like to become task member for HIV/AIDS issues, and would work closely with its cosponsors in this regard.

11. The **representative of WHO** said that her organization was preparing a paper, which would be ready in January 2001. WHO was interested in playing the coordinating role on the issue of "social service delivery". It would do its best to contribute to the preparatory process of the Conference at both the local and the global levels.

12. The **representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights** referred to the document which her organization had circulated to the Inter-Agency Meeting. Human rights was a cross-cutting issue which had featured in the Paris Declaration and the Programme of Action of the Second UN Conference on LDCs for the 1990s. OHCHR invited the Preparatory Committee to consult recommendations of the Committee on Economic and Cultural Rights and studies of the Special Rapporteurs on the impact of external debt and structural adjustment programmes on human rights. It was hoped that the sector would also be clearly reflected at LDC III.

13. The **representative of DPI** said that advocacy for the Conference was a major challenge. DPI and UNCTAD collaboration was well established, e.g. in the preparation of the Conference logo, website and brochures. DPI maintained close contact with all UN information centres and would continue to do so. However, more needed be done, and she urged all the participants in the Meeting to brief their information departments on the outcome of the Meeting, the Consultative Forum and the first session of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee. She cautioned that it would be important to keep to one slogan for the conference and resist a proliferation of slogans. In addition to the preparation of specific products (logo, website), DPI would help with press coverage and the organization of interviews by journalists. She requested the Executive Secretary to provide DPI with a list (and telephone/fax) of Senior Officials who could be reached for interview. The list should include experts on particular sectors who could provide detailed information as appropriate.

14. The **representative of UNEP** underscored that one of the root causes of global environmental degradation was pervasive poverty. UNEP, in undertaking its work to promote the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, contributed to advancing the development agenda in LDCs, particularly through its activities in the African region. For example, within one of its core areas of concentration, support to Africa, UNEP had undertaken a series of initiatives within the Secretary-General's Special Initiative for Africa, including chairing its Working Group on Water, and for development of policy support and capacity-building for international negotiations, *inter alia*, through the revitalisation of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment. UNEP's experience on initiatives such as these could make a valuable contribution during the preparation of the national action plans and the Programme of Action of the Conference.

15. The **representative of ITU** said that his organization gave priority to LDCs. The 1998 World Telecommunication Conference in Malta had adopted a special programme for LDCs, and agreed that in order to achieve concrete results, attention should be concentrated on a few LDCs at a time. A circular letter had been sent by ITU to all communications Ministers recommending that information and communications technology (ICT) figure prominently in their respective country programmes which would be presented to the Conference. ITU would prepare a document analysing the progress achieved since the last LDC conference. Finally, ITU was interested in co-managing the parallel event on "E-commerce".

16. The **representative of WIPO** appreciated the innovative approach adopted in preparing for LDC III. UNCTAD and WIPO enjoyed excellent cooperation on the issue of LDCs, including at the highest level. He shared the views of the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD regarding inclusion, ownership, action and implementation. The new Programme of Action for the LDCs should be tangible, quantifiable, measurable and implementable. WIPO had contributed to the preparations for LDC III in two phases: (i) the holding of a high-level interregional round table on LDCs and intellectual property; the outcome of the meeting would be published and made available to the preparatory process; (ii) convening of regional and interregional meetings for Asia and the Pacific region in Kathmandu in May 2000, with a subsequent meeting for Africa and the LDCs in the Arab region to be organized; the outcomes would also be made available to the preparatory process. The purpose of the meetings was to demystify intellectual property and promote its use in LDCs.

17. The **representative of UNICEF** said that the large number of United Nations Conferences and global summits had resulted in a certain degree of Conference fatigue among stakeholders. It was therefore important to ensure that LDC III was innovative and resulted in concrete commitments. In this regard he emphasized the need to ensure that important meetings did not run in parallel and that there were no overlaps in terms of objectives and activities.

18. He reiterated the need to involve New-York-based agencies to the maximum. He confirmed UNICEF's interest in participating actively in the preparatory process and in the Conference itself. In particular, he noted that UNICEF could make a positive contribution to the interactive debate on social service delivery and would be keen to be a support agency in the preparation of this event. He emphasized that this debate should build on the large number of initiatives already existing in this area and should take into account the work being undertaken by the Basic Social Services for All Task Force.

19. The **representative of ITC** expressed enthusiasm for the basic approach to the Conference. ITC was formulating a strategy for women and trade development and was working on an e-commerce activity in Africa with a women's association. This experience could be shared in the parallel event on women. This would need to be confirmed. An executive forum on national export strategies had been organized the previous year by ITC, and a similar forum on trade development in the digital economy was envisaged for the fall of 2000, whereby state-of-the-art experiences in e-commerce adapted to the needs of developing countries would be show-cased. This latter event could contribute to the parallel event on e-commerce, complementing the work of UNCTAD. The ITC–WTO–UNCTAD Joint Initiative (JITAP) could be discussed as part of the LDC III process. A whole compact, including enhancing competitiveness, South-South cooperation, vertical export diversification, and export-led poverty reduction, especially for LDCs, would be pursued. ITC would explore the possibility of merging the strategy-related executive forum concept with the Business Sector Round Table. The ITC expressed keen interest in being involved in the substantive preparations for the proposed interactive debate on "International trade, commodities and services". Formulating, monitoring, evaluating and mainstreaming export strategies (including FDI to support export strategies) could be brought to the LDC Business Forum. This event would bring together public and private sector actors to share lessons learned. These ideas, which were at a developmental stage, were relevant and useful and could serve as a basis for good inputs to the LDC Programme of Action.

20. The **representative of the World Bank** noted that LDC III provided a unique opportunity for LDCs to deliberate on issues relating to trade, macroeconomic and social issues. She emphasized the need to link Conference preparations with the preparations for all the UN conferences, particularly the high-level event on finance for development. She also noted that the Conference would provide an opportunity to focus not only on trade issues, which the Bank was actively working on through the Integrated Framework, but also on the overall macroeconomic framework. She noted that the Bank's assistance to LDCs in developing poverty reduction strategies could be an important contribution, and that discussions were under way with the UNCTAD secretariat on how best to utilize these country-level strategies in enhancing the preparatory process of the Conference and how best to create linkages between them and the outcome of the Conference.

21. The **representative of the ILO** said the interagency process was generating important initiatives, and more agencies and sectors should be included. ILO was currently concretizing its contribution to the LDC III process. It had explored initiatives involving Governments and the private sector, and a global compact involving employers and workers would be launched the following week by the United Nations Secretary-General with the focus on promotion of the declaration on labour standards. The ILO was committed to employment promotion as a key to development, social protection, including decent work, and social dialogue. In the past year, ILO, at the request of ECOSOC, had produced a paper on poverty eradication, employment, the advancement of women, decent work and poverty eradication. Further work would be done on employment promotion through small-scale enterprise development by addressing issues such as the macro-economic environment, social impact and employment creation activities. These ideas would be developed further as a concrete contribution towards a result- oriented Conference.

22. The **representative of ESCWA** noted that only one LDC (Yemen) fell under their purview. He acknowledged the cooperation that existed between the Government of Yemen and UNCTAD in the preparation of Yemen's national paper. He sought further guidance from the UNCTAD secretariat on the role of regional commissions in preparations for the Conference, especially if this would involve financial implications.

23. The **representative of UNDP** noted that the UNDP offices in LDCs had been requested to provide full support to the preparatory process. The challenge was not only to mobilize the UNDP offices but also the entire Resident Coordinator system in each country, and UNDP would play an important role in mobilizing the United Nations country teams. As an immediate measure, the UNDP office in New York was going to follow up on country-level preparations in all LDCs through its Regional Bureau Directors. UNDP had also instructed the Economic Unit in all its offices in African LDCs to assist the National Preparatory Committees and the National Resource Persons in improving the quality of the National Programme of Action. UNDP was also in touch with the UNDG to ensure that all agencies of the United Nations system were involved in the preparations.

III. Concluding statement by the Chair

24. The Chairperson thanked all participants for their excellent contributions. The meeting augured well for collective work in the months to come in the preparatory process of LDC-III.

25. She particularly thanked those who had been collaborating with the Conference secretariat in the past few months on a range of activities, and she expressed deep appreciation to those organizations that had prepared written contributions for the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee. Some organizations had expressed keen interest in playing a role in a number of key areas both at the Conference and during the preparatory process. The Conference secretariat was fully ready to collaborate with them. She again invited all colleagues to contact the Conference secretariat in the coming days to discuss specific roles they wished to assume in the course of preparatory activities.

26. The Conference secretariat would be prepared to organize informal meetings the following week. It would also make available materials used for the Power Point presentations.

Annex I

SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS MADE OR TO BE MADE BY AGENCIES

OSCAL

OSCAL has prepared an issues note on global conferences and their linkages with the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s.

OSCAL is ready to contribute on:

(i) Enhancing productive capacities in the area of energy and an expert group meeting on science and technology in collaboration with other UN agencies;

(ii) Women entrepreneurs forum.

ESCAP

ESCAP has prepared three subregional evaluation studies on LDCs in South-East Asia, South Asia and the Pacific region. A synthesis will be ready by mid-August. An intergovernmental regional conference is planned in the fourth quarter of 2000 to formulate the vision and position for Asia-Pacific LDCs for the global meeting. A special body meeting for LDC is also planned to be held in the early part of the first quarter of 2001.

FAO

FAO indicated at the last Inter-Agency Meeting that it would do a study on agricultural development in LDCs with a very broad scope. The study would examine, among other things, the agricultural potential of LDCs, the opportunities and challenges they face in the external environment and country-level agricultural strategies.

WHO

WHO is preparing a background document on health as a contribution to the social service delivery theme. The study will be ready in January 2001.

The organization is also working with UN/AIDS.

UNAIDS

UNAIDS will assist, through its regional offices, in the preparation of the national action plans.

UNAIDS would like to be task member on the HIV/AIDS issue, and it would work closely with its cosponsors in this issue.

DPI

DPI has been closely involved in the design of the website, logo, guidelines for the use of the logo and brochure for the Conference. It will work with UNCTAD to provide the leadership in advocacy and public information outreach activities during the preparatory process and at the Conference itself.

UNEP

UNEP will explore the possibility of collaborating on natural resource management in the context of food security with FAO, and in the field of environmental refugees with UNHCR.

ITU

ITU sent out circular letters to all LDCs' telecommunication ministers to ask them to make information and telecommunications technology figure prominently in the country action programmes.

It will present a comprehensive document on progress made in telecom development in LDCs since the last Conference.

It is exploring the possibility of co-managing of the event on "e-commerce"

ITC

ITC is undertaking work on Women in Trade Development, which would enable it to contribute to the Women Entrepreneurs Forum. ITC needs to confirm that this work will be sufficiently advanced to allow it to contribute.

An Executive Forum is to be organized in September 2000 on "export promotion in the digital economy", which would contribute to the e-commerce parallel event.

ITC and UNCTAD are discussing ITC's lead role in organizing a Business Sector Round Table. ITC would like to merge this Round Table with export strategy formulation activities, drawing on an Executive Forum organized by ITC last year on "Redesigning Export Promotion – A Strategic Response".

World Bank

The Bank has been working directly with UNCTAD on trade and will continue to contribute to the Integrated Framework.

The Bank is exploring with UNCTAD the possibility of sharing the experience of the country-level poverty reduction strategies with a view to enhancing the preparatory process of the Conference.

ECA

ECA is actively preparing the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, during which the special event for the LDCs of Africa is also expected to take place.

WIPO

WIPO has contributed to the preparations for LDC III in two phases: (i) the holding of a high-level interregional round table on LDCs and intellectual property; the outcome of the meeting will be published and made available for the preparatory process; (ii) convening of regional and interregional meetings for Asia and the Pacific region in Kathmandu in May 2000, with a subsequent meeting for Africa and the LDCs in the Arab region to be organized; the outcomes will also be made available to the preparatory process.

WTO

The WTO is committed to improving market access opportunities for LDCs and the quality of trade-related assistance to enable LDCs to draw on the benefits of the multilateral trading system and assist their integration into the global economy.

The core business of the WTO is the progressive elimination of barriers to trade through negotiations and autonomous market access improvements. On 3 May 2000, the Director-General reported that several WTO Members had indicated market access measures they had taken and intended to take to improve market access opportunities for LDCs. The DG remains committed to consulting with Members to seek continuing improvements for LDCs' market access opportunities. Any further improvements will be reported.

WTO efforts for delivering technical assistance remain focused on the Integrated Framework for trade-related Technical Assistance for LDCs (IF). In this regard, the WTO and other IF core agencies (ITC, IMF, UNCTAD, UNDP, World Bank) are at the stage of following up on the decisions taken by the Heads and representatives of the agencies for improving the Integrated Framework.

Annex II

AGENDA

10 a.m.- 1 p.m.	Opening of the Meeting by Ms. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, Executive Secretary, LDC-III
	Adoption of the Agenda of the Meeting
	Opening remarks by Mr. Carlos Fortin, Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD
	Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Conference on the progress in the preparatory process for the Conference and issues before the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee (IPC) and on the preparation of country-level programmes of action
	Briefing by the Secretary of the Conference on the proposed design and organizational structure of the Conference
	General discussions
3 p.m. - 6 p.m.	Reports by organizations and agencies on their contributions to the preparatory process for the Conference and the Conference itself
	Interactive discussions
	Summing up by the Chair Closure of Meeting

Annex III

ATTENDANCE

1. The following States were represented at the Meeting:

Central African Republic; Holy See; Japan.

2. The following intergovernmental organization was represented at the Meeting:

European Community.

3. The following specialized agencies and related organizations were represented at the Meeting:

International Labour Organisation
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
World Health Organization
World Bank
International Telecommunication Union
United Nations Industrial Development Organization
World Intellectual Property Organization

4. The Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Development Programme; the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, UNAIDS, the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries, and the Department of Public Information were represented at the Meeting. The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO was also represented at the Meeting.